

The Francis Scott Key Bridge

A Toll Facility Of The Maryland Transportation Authority

The Francis Scott Key Bridge opened in March 1977 and is named for the author of the *Star Spangled Banner*. The bridge is the outermost of three toll crossings of Baltimore's Harbor. Upon completion, the bridge structure and its approaches became the final links in Interstate 695 (the Baltimore Beltway).

By the early 1960s, the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel (Interstate 895), the first crossing of Baltimore's Harbor, had reached its traffic capacity, and motorists encountered heavy congestion and delays almost daily during rush hours.

The State Roads Commission, predecessor of the Maryland Transportation Authority, concluded there was a need for a second harbor crossing and began planning a single-tube tunnel under the Patapsco River, downstream from the Harbor Tunnel. The proposed site was between

Hawkins Point and Sollers Point. Plans also were underway for a drawbridge over Curtis Creek to connect Hawkins Point to Sollers Point.

Contractors took borings of the harbor bottom in the spring of 1969. Bids for construction of the proposed tunnel were opened on July 30, 1970, but price proposals were substantially higher than the engineering estimates. Officials drafted alternative plans, including the concept of a four-lane bridge.

The bridge, at an estimated cost of \$110 million, represented the best alternative because it allowed for more traffic lanes

and carried lower operating and maintenance costs than a tunnel. In addition, a bridge would provide a route across the Baltimore Harbor for vehicles transporting hazardous materials (these materials are

prohibited from both the Baltimore Harbor and Fort McHenry [Interstate 95] tunnels).

Construction on the Francis Scott Key Bridge began in 1972, and the bridge opened to traffic on March 23, 1977.

Including its connecting approaches, the bridge project is 10.9 miles in length. Other structures along the thruway include

a .64-mile dual-span drawbridge over Curtis Creek and two .74-mile parallel bridge structures that carry traffic over Bear Creek, near Bethlehem Steel's Sparrows Point plant.

The Key Bridge is located in an area rich with American history. Scholars believe the span crosses within 100 yards of the site where Francis Scott Key witnessed the bombardment of Fort McHenry on the evening of Sept. 12, 1814. That battle inspired Key to write the words of the *Star Spangled Banner*.

Located just southeast of the bridge are the ruins of Fort Carroll, a 3.4-acre



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Background (continued)



Approximately 12.3 million vehicles traveled the bridge during Fiscal Year 2008.

About the Authority

Fort McHenry Tunnel (I-95)

Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge (US 301)

Francis Scott Key Bridge (I-695)

Baltimore Harbor Tunnel (I-895)

Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge (US 40)

John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway (I-95)

William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial (Bay) Bridge (US 50/301)

man-made island. The structure was designed by then Brevet-Colonel Robert E. Lee and named for Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Construction of the fort began in 1848, under the supervision of Brevet-Colonel Lee, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Fort Carroll was important for the defense of Baltimore -- before the fort was created, the only military defensive structure between Baltimore and the Chesapeake Bay was Fort McHenry.

The government abandoned the fort as a military post in 1920, and the island was declared excess property in 1923. However, the War Department took no immediate steps to sell the land. In May 1958, a Baltimore attorney purchased the island for \$10,000, but development plans never materialized. The fort now is deserted.

Along with the Fort McHenry and Baltimore Harbor Tunnels, the Francis Scott Key Bridge is part of a network of Baltimore Harbor crossings that provides convenient and safe transportation for local and interstate traffic.

The Maryland Transportation Authority is an independent State agency that finances, owns and operates the State's seven toll facilities. The Authority's eight Members, appointed by the Governor with consent of the State Senate, serve as the agency's policy-setting and governing body. Maryland's Secretary of Transportation serves as Authority Chairman.

Daily operations of the seven facilities are carried out by the Authority's 1,700 employees. Overall management of Authority operations is handled by the agency's Executive Secretary.

The Transportation Authority oversees the State's seven toll facilities and the Maryland Transportation Authority Police. The agency has statutory authority to act on behalf of the Maryland Department of Transportation to supervise, finance, construct, operate and maintain transportation facilities.

Maryland's toll facilities were financed and constructed through revenue bonds. The outstanding principal and interest due each year is paid from toll revenues. Toll revenues are the primary source of funds. The Authority's toll receipts are pooled, and revenues from all seven facilities are combined to pay for operating, maintaining and making capital improvements to these facilities.

A Commitment to Safety

The Maryland Transportation Authority Police is a nationally accredited force with more than 600 sworn and civilian employees. Specialized K-9, motorcycle, all-terrain-vehicle, marine and anti-aggressive-driving units help provide maximum safety and security at Authority facilities, the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport and the Port of Baltimore. To maintain the highest level of professionalism and ethics, Transportation Authority Police officers remain true to their mission of safeguarding life and property, preserving peace, preventing and detecting crime, enforcing the law and protecting the rights of citizens.

The force has received local and national recognition for its road-way-safety efforts, which include child-passenger-safety awareness programs, anti-aggressive-driving initiatives and sobriety checkpoints. These efforts have been successful due to the continued teamwork among Authority Police and Operations personnel.

This same teamwork drives the Authority's Traffic Safety Committee, headed by the Chief of Police, Chief Engineer and Director of Operations. The committee provides leadership of Authority efforts to help ensure safe roadways for Maryland's citizens and visitors.

E-ZPass® Maryland

The Maryland Transportation Authority is a member of the *E-ZPass*® InterAgency Group (IAG), which continues to develop a seamless electronic-toll-collection system throughout the northeastern United States. *E-ZPass* Maryland has grown to include more than 800,000 active transponders and has reduced significantly typical, peak-hour congestion at Maryland toll plazas. Customers from IAG agencies can pay tolls electronically in Maryland. As more motorists use *E-ZPass*, convenience will increase; traffic congestion in and around toll-plaza areas will decrease; and engine-idling time will be reduced, resulting in reduced vehicle emissions. For additional information about the *E-ZPass* Maryland program and its standard, commuter and business plans, visit www.ezpassmd.com.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

The Authority continues to use ITS technology to improve safety and reduce congestion through enhanced incident detection and response, while informing motorists of real-time roadway and travel conditions and alternative routes. The Authority is an active partner in the Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART). Through a series of variable-message signs and highway-advisory-radio messages, the CHART system advises motorists of traffic conditions along major routes and suggests alternatives to avoid delays and congestion. This information, as well as real-time traffic images are available on CHART's website at www.traffic.md.gov.

Your Toll Dollars At Work

Fast Facts

Construction Dates

1972 - March 1977

Cost

\$60.3 million

Location

I-695 outer-harbor crossing:
1.6 miles of 4-lane bridge structure (185-foot vertical clearance, 8.7 miles of approach roadways)

Toll Rates

Commuter discount with valid Maryland-issued *E-ZPass*: up to 80-percent savings per trip
2 axles: \$2
3 axles: \$6
4 axles: \$9
5 axles: \$12
6 axles: \$15

Annual Traffic

12.3 million vehicles

Contact Us

For more information about the Maryland Transportation Authority, please call the Division of Communications at 410-537-1017, or, toll-free, at 1-866-713-1596.

E-mail: mdta@mdtransportationauthority.com, or visit us at www.mdtransportationauthority.com



The Authority reminds its customers to stay alert and exercise caution when traveling through workzones, toll plazas and around police vehicles.



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The Maryland Transportation Authority is an Equal Opportunity Employer and fully complies with all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.